



The digitalization of administrative services in Germany: the case of local one-stop-shops (LOSS)

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German Local One Stop Shops (LOSS)

- ▶ Organizational Units of Local Governments
- ▶ Mirror the tradition of functionally strong local governments in Germany with broad task profiles
- ▶ Entities of public service delivery closest to citizens
- ▶ Institutional invention of 1970s → today in all cities with more than 15.000 inhabitants
- ▶ Bundle services in various fields of citizen-related services at “one stop” (single window access)
- ▶ Examples: passports, certificates of marriage/birth etc., registry affairs, driving licenses, car registration, parking permits, citizenship affairs, traffic fines etc.
- ▶ Quite advanced in terms of e-government

Ongoing Research Project: “German LOSS”

Independent Variable:

Institutional reforms in LOSSs regarding:

- Labor organization
- Staff situation
- **Digitalization in LOSSs**

Impact

Dependent Variable:

LOSS performance changes regarding:

- Task fulfillment
- Service provision (efficiency, efficacy)
- Citizens/employees satisfaction (overload?)

Context factors

Local capacities/resources

Political preferences

Tasks characteristics

Legal rules

Methods

- ▶ Standardized online survey of mayors, municipal office directors and heads of staff council (German municipalities > 15,000 inhabitants; 750 cities with a LOSS)
- ▶ Response rate: mayors: 31%; heads of staff councils: 35%
- ▶ Four municipal cases studies of digitalization
- ▶ Further case studies planned: survey of the citizens and of the employees

Current State of Digitalization in German LOSSs

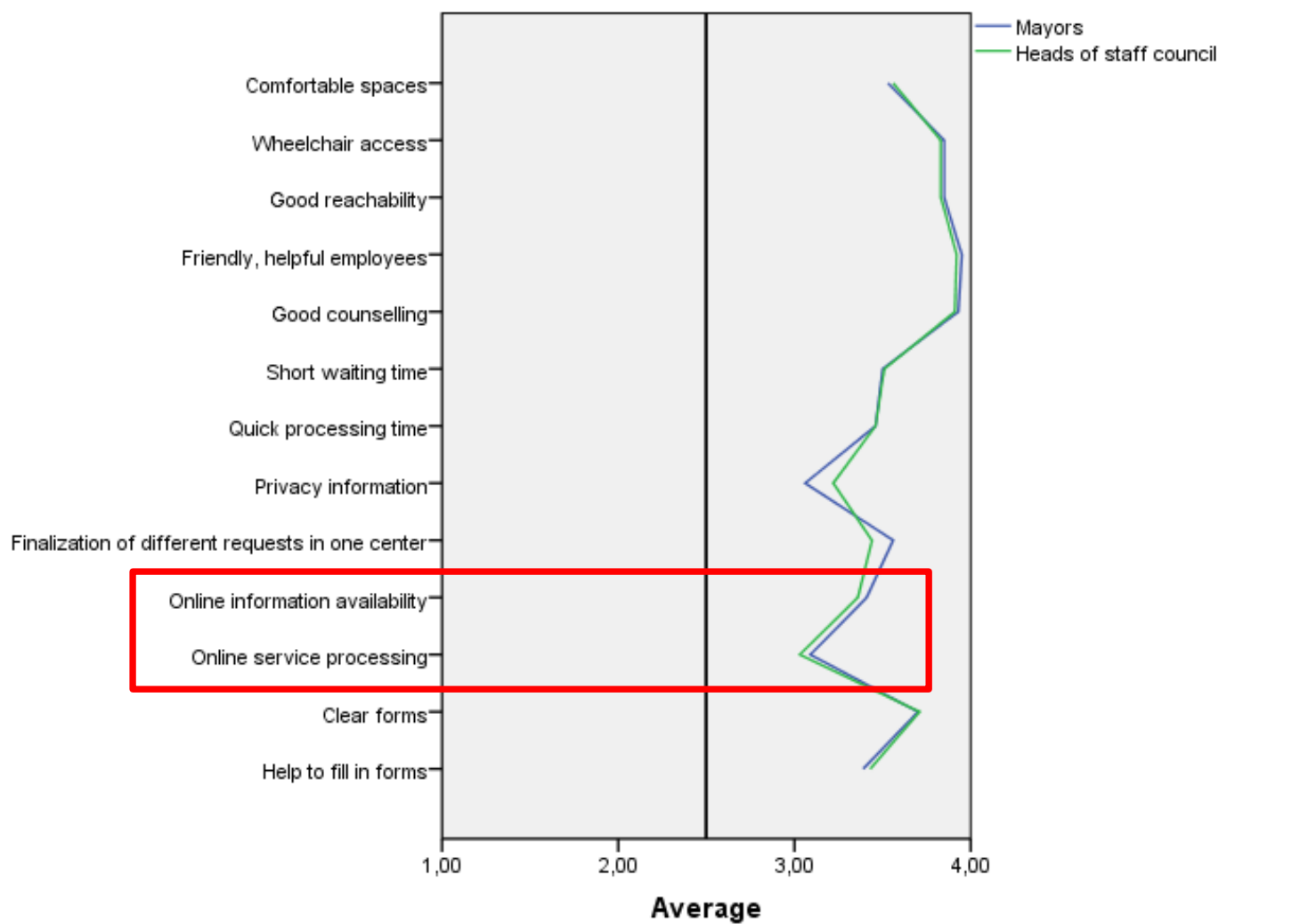
Current State/Problems of the German LOSSs

- **Increasing bureaucratic burdens/rules:**
 - Legal regulations more complicated/burdensome
 - Additional effort to comply with laws → 10% extra costs for staff → but: human resources often not available
- **Increasing citizens' expectations:**
 - Partly complaining about unsatisfactory service provision (e.g. long waiting times, shut down of facilities in sub-urban areas)
- **Employees partly dissatisfied work conditions:**
 - Work overload; fiscal constraints of local governments
 - complaints around high fluctuation
 - problems with recruitment of qualified staff (payment lower than in private sector)
- ***Digitilization as a solution or a "fatal remedy"?***

Current state of the digitalization in German LOSSs

	Infos available online	Partially to be processed online	Fully to be processed online	n
Passports	74.8%	25.2%	4.8%	210
Certificates (birth/marriage certificates)	71.4%	25.2%	9.2%	119
Certificates of good conduct	70.7%	27.1%	13.3%	188
Registration of residence	60.5%	36.0%	7.1%	197
Authentication of certificates	89.3%	10.1%	2.7%	149
Dog tax Registration	71.3%	32.8%	5.7%	122
Residents parking permit	75.7%	18.4%	8.7%	103
Parking permit for people with disabilities	80.2%	20.8%	0.9%	106 1/23/18
Housing subsidy	75.6%	21.8%	3.8%	78
Car registration (only county-free cities)	75.0%	23.5%	7.4%	68

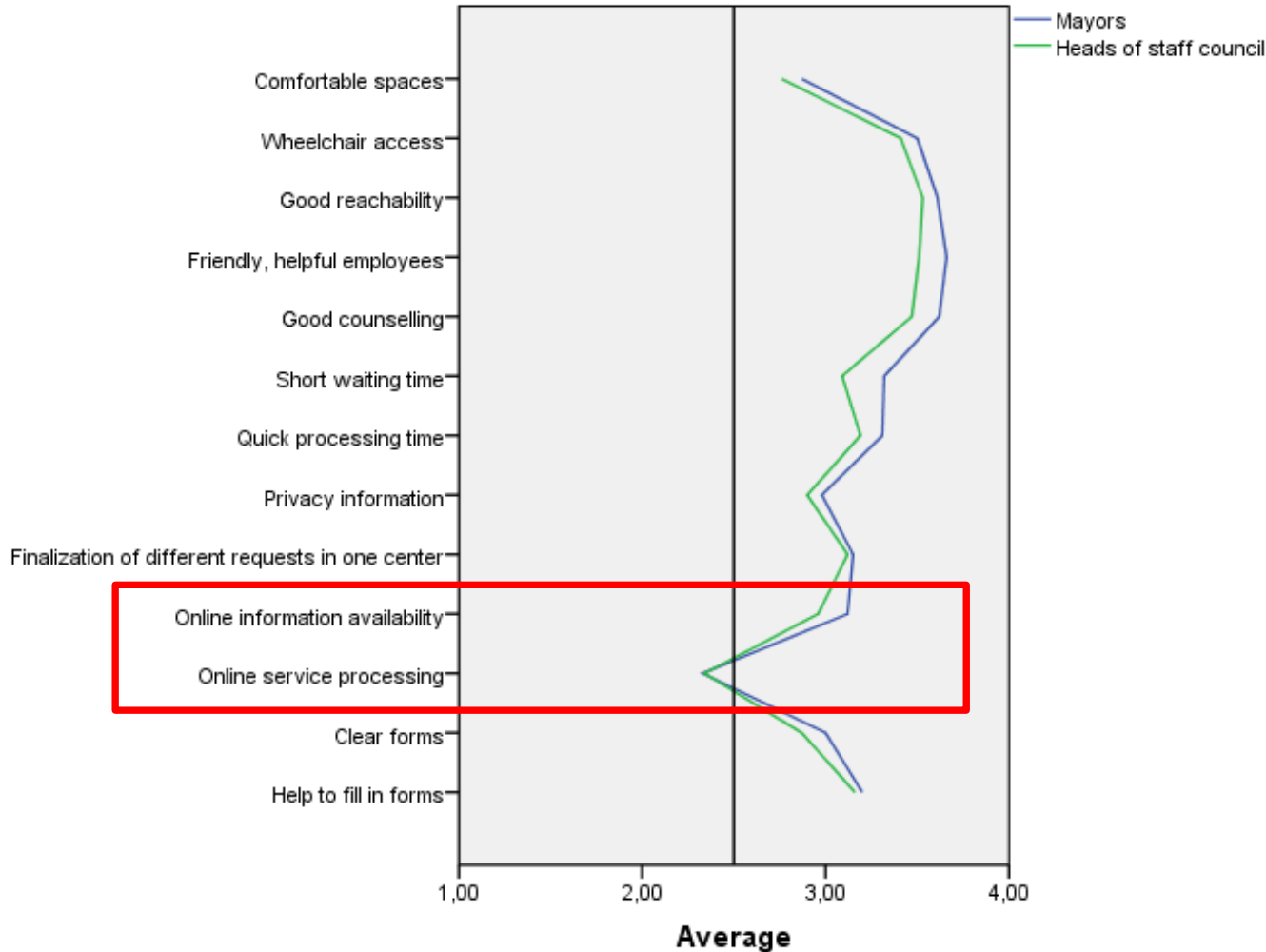
In your opinion, how important are the following demands for a citizens-friendly LOSS?



1 = unimportant; 2 = fairly unimportant; 3 = fairly important; 4 = important

N. of mayors = 212 bis 218; N. of heads of staff council = 236 bis 243

In your opinion, to what extent are these demands met in your LOSS?



1 = not at all carried out; 2 = fairly not carried out; 3 = fairly carried out; 4 = entirely carried out

N. of mayors = 208 bis 218; N. of heads of staff council = 204 bis 236

Digital services of German LOSSs: current state and future expectations

→ So far, no local service available that is provided by all German municipalities fully electronically without media breaks. However, there are significant....

...Examples of quite advanced digitalized services:

Registration of residence

Residents' parking permits

Traffic fines

Registration of secondary residence

Online Complaint Management App

...expected future digitalized services

Driving licenses

Registry office

Nationality/Citizenship

Foreigner Issues

NB:
almost exclusively delegated state tasks

(Non-) Utilization of digital services: example of online forms

Online forms

Forms available

Residents parking permit;
Landlord certificate;
Requests for car no. plate;
certificate of good conduct



Utilization gap

No. of online forms available much higher than no. of actually used ones (City A: 600 forms, out of which 510 (85%) **not used**)

Proposed solutions

Reduce no. of online forms to those really needed and working; adjust offer to demand

Explanation

Even most needed online forms hard to find because of confusing websites (“you can’t see the wood for the trees”),

Utilization of digital services: example of online scheduling

Online Scheduling

Positive evaluation throughout

Better management of customers volume

Employees' satisfaction increases

Better organization of workload (technically & temporally); low cancellation rates

Citizens' satisfaction increases

Lower waiting times at appointments

Problems with...

spontaneous customers & incidently occurring technical issues



Hurdles and Barriers to Digitalization

Current Hurdles of Digitalization in German LOSSs

- Low political pressure towards strategic digital projects
- E-government initiatives sporadic/ incremental;
- Lack of clear objectives regarding digital service delivery
- Some political announcements far away from reality (and staff members/managers are well aware of that!):
“[...]saying that our target until 2020 is to try and make all our services consistently available online is not possible.” (local manager)
- Lack of digitalization budgets, effective governance structures
- Confusion of (few) well-functioning services and (many) poorly working ones on local websites
- Problem: “good” services/forms ones hardly to be found, because (many) “bad” ones hinder finding the (few) “good” ones
- Lack of digital marketing concepts in order to promote/advertise well functioning services (those without media-break)

Barriers to digitalization in LOSSs (ranked by frequency of mentions)

Obstacles

Description

<p>1</p> <p>Legal</p>	<p>Very often mentioned; however: legal obstacles often used as an excuse; special problems: privacy policies, non-disclosure of personal information, storage obligations</p>
<p>2</p> <p>Financial</p>	<p>Often mentioned; example: Data Management System for car registration costs around 160,000 €; often not enough funds available for technical infrastructures / qualified staff</p>
<p>3</p> <p>Staff</p>	<p>HR recruitment a very big issue, (staff with digital competences); standing staff often not qualified adequately (generational problem)</p>
<p>4</p> <p>Political</p>	<p>Budget for digitalization often not a political priority; interest of local councilors low; “digital budget” as a cross-cutting issue difficult to defend politically</p>
<p>5</p> <p>Technical</p>	<p>Technical barriers exist (server architecture, old DMS, etc.), BUT: negligibly low, considered to be solvable; perceived more severe once all other barriers have been overcome</p>

Perceived Benefits and Threats of Digitalization

Benefits and Threats of Digitalization

Perceived benefits

- Wide range of assessments: from skeptics to enthusiasts
- Benefits of digitalization valued differently by staff members and local top managers
- Performance improvements also recognized, specifically by top managers (higher processing speed; lower waiting times), less by staff members

Threats/Fears

- Loosing of jobs not a problem
- Staff members don't generally see digitalization as work relief
- Reason: Shifts of workload from front to back office; email flows; permanent reachability; denser organization of work
- Generational and qualification problems: affinity to digitalization depending on age and abilities
- Reduction of LOSS field offices triggered by digitalization

Standardization vs. variety of digital services: a key problem of the German de-centralized state

Standardization/Centralization of Digital Services as a Driver or Threat?

Standardization/centralization as a *driver* for digitalization?

Pro state-/ federal solutions

- Standardization to be pushed by state/ federal government should push it
- Uniform procedures important for delegated state tasks performed by LOSSs
- Good examples of standardized digital services (e.g. car registration)

Some LOSS managers welcome more centralized online portals to be provided by state governments; reason: increase pressure on LGs to push more standardized solutions

Standardization/centralization as a *threat* for digitalization?

Pro Local solutions

- State/federal level actors too remote; they don't grasp how things work in practice on the local level
- Suggestions on digital solutions must come from the local level, otherwise no improvements → bottom-up strategy

Street-level knowledge indispensable for well functioning digital solutions in LOSSs
Centralization to the disadvantage of effectiveness of service delivery

Open Questions

How to implement the digital agenda of German government (coalition treaty; e.g. once only principle; digital by default; digitalization of 100 most important services for citizens etc.)?

How to reconcile high levels of data protection in Germany with demands of efficient digital service delivery (free of media breaks)?

How to make public authorities interact digitally without violating privacy policies/date protection laws?

How to steer the implementation of the Federal digital agenda within a highly fragmented federal system → not recognized in coal. treaty!